

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /056 W
-----271851Z 086716 /50

R 271506Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6385
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PGOV, IS
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH BEGIN CONFIDANT

BEGIN SUMMARY.. THE LIKUD'S CHIEF SPOKESMAN
WAS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE DAYAN APPOINTMENT BUT ADMITTED
THAT A MISTAKE WAS MADE IN HANDLING IT VIS-A-VIS THE DMC.
HE WAS STILL OPTIMISTIC THAT THE DMC WOULD COME INTO THE
COALITION. CONFIRMING THAT THE CABINET WOULD BE
STREAMLINED, HE SAW TWO MINISTRIES GOING TO THE NRP
BUT DOUBTED THAT THE AGUDAH PARTIES WOULD INSIST ON A
CABINET POST. BEGIN APPEARANCE AT QADOUM WAS NOT AN IM-
PROMPTU DECISION. THE KNESSET WILL CONVENE JUNE 13 AT
WHICH TIME THE LIKUD HOPES TO HAVE A COALITION READY. END
SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND EMBOFF MET MAY 26 WITH ELIYAHU
BEN-ELISSAR, SPOKESMAN FOR THE LIKUD AND CLOSE ASSOCIATE
OF BEGIN. HE IS A MEMBER OF THE LIKUD TEAM NEGOTIATING
WITH THE DMC AND THE NRP AND WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO
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HAVE AN IMPORTANT POSITION IN BEGIN'S INNER CIRCLE.

2. BEN-ELISSAR REGARDED THE CHOICE OF DAYAN AS FOREIGN
MINISTER IN THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT A BRILLIANT MOVE.
"HE ADDS STRENGTH; THIS WILL BE A STRONG GOVERNMENT."
HE SAID THAT THE MOVE HAD BEEN IN THE WORKS FOR A NUM-
BER OF DAYS. ASKED TO COMMENT ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF

THE APPOINTMENT, HE SAID THAT DAYAN IS WELL-KNOWN AND HIGHLY REGARDED IN WASHINGTON AND EUROPEAN CAPITALS. THE ARABS RESPECT HIM. HE WILL ALSO BE AN ASSET IN DEALING WITH JEWISH COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE ISRAEL. AS FOR THE DOMESTIC RAMIFICATIONS, BEN-ELISSAR THOUGHT THAT THE APPOINTMENT WILL BE POPULAR WITH THE PUBLIC. HE ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WILL NOT HELP IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE DMC. HE ALLOWED THAT, FROM THAT VIEWPOINT, THE APPOINTMENT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A MISTAKE. HE ALSO IMPLIED THAT THE HANDLING OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER; WHILE THE NRP HAD BEEN INFORMED JUST BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT WAS MADE PUBLIC, THE DMC LEARNED ABOUT IT FROM THE RADIO.

3. BEN-ELISSAR DENIED THAT THE CHOICE OF DAYAN WAS MEANT AS ANY SORT OF SIGNAL TO THE DMC THAT THE LIKUD COULD GET ALONG WITHOUT YADIN'S PARTY. HE ALSO PREDICTED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF DISGRUNTLEMENT WITHIN THE LIKUD AT BEGIN'S REACHING OUTSIDE THE PARTY FOR SUCH AN IMPORTANT POST. (COMMENT: FROM ALL INDICATIONS, BEN-ELISSAR GREATLY UNDERESTIMATED THE STORM DAYAN'S APPOINTMENT IS GENERATING -- AMONG THE PRESS, GENERAL PUBLIC, WITHIN THE LABOR AND LIKUD PARTIES, NOT TO MENTION THE BITTER REACTION IN THE DMC -- SEE SEPTTEL.) BEN-ELISSAR BELIEVED THAT AFTER A FEW DAYS OF SULKING THE DMC WOULD RESUME TALKS (TALKS SCHEDULED FOR THAT MORNING WITH THE LIKUD HAD BEEN ABRUPTLY CANCELLED BY THE DMC FOLLOWING THE DAYAN ANNOUNCEMENT) AND EVENTUALLY COME INTO THE COALITION. THERE WERE STILL MANY PORTFOLIOS AVAILABLE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEM. FOR EXAMPLE: AN ENLARGED SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTRY, WHERE THE DMC WILL HAVE AMPLE LATITUDE TO INTRODUCE THEIR REFORMS, AND THE JUSTICE MINISTRY -- "RUBENSTEIN WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT CHOICE FOR JUSTICE MINISTER."

4. BEN-ELISSAR CONFIRMED THAT THE CABINET WILL BE REDUCED TO 12-14 MINISTRIES WITH THE COMBINING OF THE EXISTING MINISTRIES OF POLICE, HOUSING, COMMUNICATIONS, HEALTH, IMMIGRATION ABSORPTION, TOURISM AND POSSIBLY RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS WITH OTHER MINISTRIES. AMONG OTHER CHANGES, BEN-ELISSAR SAID THAT THE TELEPHONE SYSTEM WOULD BE REMOVED FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRIES AND MADE A PUBLIC COMPANY. "WE HAVE TO END THIS NON-SENSE OF WAITING YEARS FOR A NEW TELEPHONE."

5. THE NRP WILL RECEIVE THE INTERIOR PORTFOLIO PROB-

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ABLY BURG), WHICH MIGHT INCLUDE RELIGIOUS
AFFAIRS, AS WELL AS THE EDUCATION MINISTRY (HAMMER).
BEN-ELISSAR DID NOT THINK THAT THE TWO AGUDAH PARTIES
WOULD INSIST ON CABINET POSTS. HOWEVER, HE FORESAW A
MAJOR DIFFICULTY IN TALKS WITH THEM. THE LIKUD COULD
NEVER ACCEPT THE AGUDAH DEMAND TO END MILITARY SERVICE
FOR WOMEN. HE MADE NO SUGGESTION AS TO HOW THIS COULD
BE RESOLVED.

6. DOMESTIC ISSUES WILL BE A MAJOR AREA OF FOCUS FOR
THE GOVERNMENT. SOME OF THE HISTADRUT'S ENTERPRISES
WILL BE MADE INTO PUBLIC COMPANIES. BEN-ELISSAR PRE-
DICTED THAT THE LIKUD'S HANDLING OF LABOR PROBLEMS WILL
BE AN IMPROVEMENT OVER THE NEAR CHAOS THAT HAS REIGNED
IN THIS AREA IN RECENT MONTHS. HE POINTED OUT THAT
IN THE NINE MONTHS EZER WEIZMANN WAS MINISTER OF TRANSPORT
THERE WERE NO STRIKES IN THE PORTS OR AMONG WORKERS ASSO-
CIATED WITH AIR TRAFFIC. AS SOON AS TROUBLE APPEARED,
WEIZMAN WOULD DASH OFF TO THE PORTS AND BY STRAIGHT TALK
TO THE WORKERS -- SOMETHING YAACOBI NEVER DID -- SETTLE
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MATTERS WITHOUT WORK STOPPAGES.

7. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION, BEN-ELISSAR SAID THAT BEGIN'S APPEARANCE AT QADOUM LAST WEEK WAS A CONSIDERED MOVE AFTER THE PROS AND CONS HAD BEEN CAREFULLY WEIGHTED. BEGIN'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE INVITATION HAD COME LONG BEFORE THE ELECTION. ALTHOUGH AWARE OF LIKELY NEGATIVE REACTIONS IN MANY CIRCLES, BEGIN THOUGHT A CHANGE OF PLANS AFTER WINNING THE ELECTION WOULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD BY HIS CONSTITUENCY. IN A DIFFERENT CONTEXT, BEN-ELISSAR COMMENTED ON BEGIN'S "SOFTNESS" IN INTER-PARTY NEGOTIATIONS -- A CHARACTERIZATION WE HAVE HEARD PREVIOUSLY (TEL AVIV 3702). ON THE OTHER HAND, BEN-ELISSAR SAID THAT LIBERAL PARTY LEADER SIMCHA EHRLICH WAS TOUGH IN NEGOTIATIONS AND WAS DOING A GOOD JOB IN THE TALKS WITH THE DMC AND NRP.

8. BEN-ELISSAR SAID THAT THE ELECTION RESULTS WOULD BE PUBLISHED OFFICIALLY NEXT WEEK AND THAT THE KNESSET WILL CONVENE ON JUNE 13. THE LIKUD PREFERRED THE POSTPONEMENT FROM JUNE 6 (WHICH HERETOFORE HAD BEEN THE EXPECTED OPENING DATE) BECAUSE IT IS HOPED THAT A GOVERNMENT COALITION MIGHT BE READY BY THE TIME THE KNESSET OPENS.
LEWIS

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